

FY22 Operations Budget - April 6, 2021 Hearing Testimony

My name is Peter Gray and I am here representing the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, its 1500 members in Montgomery County and the thousands of other supporters who live, work, and travel here.

I want to highlight a few areas of concern with regards to the County Executive's proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget which we hope the Council can correct.

Parks/Planning

WABA asks the Council to restore funding cut from the agencies' request related to rehabilitating aging trails infrastructure and the provision of trail amenities. This includes \$148,600 for an FTE engineer position and \$60,000 for trail amenities including bike racks, wayfinding signs, benches etc..

MCDOT

Bikeshare funding for operations and maintenance has been shrinking the last few years, and a further decrease in funding this year is likely to result in removal of existing stations from the network and fewer bikes available to the public. Shrinking the Capital Bikeshare program the same year that the region has seen explosive growth in bicycling for transportation is at odds with the County's non-auto modeshare, emissions reduction, and Vision Zero goals. The Council should increase operations and maintenance funding to sustain the current number of stations. The additional bikeshare stations are needed for the densification of the system necessary for it to succeed and attract more riders. At a minimum, the funding for this program should be maintained at the same level as in FY 2021.

WABA supports the demands of the Montgomery County Better Buses Campaign. Montgomery County should conduct a comprehensive redesign and reimaging of the Ride On and Metrobus systems, with an improvement and investment plan for the next 15 years.

MCPD - WABA supports passage of Maryland House bill 564 which would enable the County to transfer automated traffic enforcement operations from MCPD to MCDOT. Placing automated enforcement functions in the agency that also is tasked with remaking our streets to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries due to traffic crashes is logical and will increase the efficiency of the automated enforcement actions and will help MCDOT implement Vision Zero policies on Montgomery County's roads.

In addition, we separately urge the Council to reduce funding for police traffic enforcement patrols while transferring those enforcement functions to unarmed civilian County employees. Currently, we have seen nationally and locally how police traffic enforcement actions have a disproportionate impact on our communities of color and create unnecessary conflict with those communities. WABA notes that the County's own February 4, 2021 Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Recommendations Report studying these issues has recommended the removal of armed police from traffic enforcement. This is a policy the Council should implement through the Operations Budget process.